



New Mexico Association of Community Partners
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February 21, 2018

Chairman Ajit V. Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE, PROTECT THE LIFELINE PROGRAM WC Docket Nos. 17-287, 11-42, 09-197

Dear Chairman Pai:

On behalf of the New Mexico Association of Community Partners, a non-profit community action agency that works directly with and advocates for low-income people, I am writing to urge you to reject new proposals that will weaken the Lifeline program, and to tell you how the program helps our community.

Our agency has assisted more than 3,000 individuals apply for Lifeline phones, over the past four years (we have tracked all applications). Most of these customers had no way to pay for either a landline or a cell phone. A few applied for phones for their kids, to stay in touch after school or while the parent was at work. I've heard hundreds of stories from customers about their lives and what circumstances brought them into my office. Most of our customers have been either homeless, living in extreme poverty, or recent immigrants. Many in the first two categories are Veterans, disabled, and victims of crime (domestic, street violence). A small percentage appeared to be drug or alcohol dependent.

When I reviewed the reasons people listed as to how they wanted to use their Lifeline phones, I would rank in the following order:

1. Job seeking -- employers will not hire if they have no way to contact prospective employee;
2. Contact with medical professionals;
3. Emergencies -- especially elderly people who have never had cell phones in the past or who can no longer afford a landline, and people living on the streets; and
4. Housing applications

I would be happy to testify at any meeting to tell some of the heartbreaking and poignant stories I've heard, and about the desperate need for these phones in our community. Please reconsider proposals that would limit this program. I have seen how it is making a difference. I can be reached by phone at (505)321-0628, or laura@nmacp.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Bruzzese". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Laura Bruzzese
Communications Specialist

CC: House of Representatives Members from NM